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BY:
ALAN MOORE, STAN WOCH
& JOHN TOTLEBEN

SHE SAT ALL NIGHT WITH HIM, TALKING ABOUT IT, AND IN THE MORNING NOTHING HAD CHANGED.

HE STILL HAD TO GO. SHE STILL DIDN'T LIKE IT.

THE BOYS ARE RUNNING DOWN TO THE WATER.

THE STRANGE YOUNG ENGLISHMAN, CONSTANTINE, HAD STEPPED INTO THEIR LIVES AND THEN STEPPED OUT AGAIN AS SWIFTLY, LEAVING A TRAIL OF HINTS AND GLIMMERINGS BEHIND HIM.

A TRAIL INTENDED TO BE FOLLOWED.

THE BOYS ARE RUNNING DOWN TO THE WATER, LAUGHING AND PUNCHING EACH OTHER, GOOSE-FLESHED IN THE COLD GOLD OF THE HOLLOW SUNLIGHT...

HE WOULD DETACH MIND FROM BODY, SENDING HIS CONSCIOUSNESS SOARING OUT ACROSS AMERICA ON A KNOTTED KITE-STRING OF ENIGMA. HE SAID HE'D RETURN TO HER EVERY FEW DAYS.

EMBRACING HIM, SHE DID NOT REPLY.

HOPPING GINGERLY, LIKE CRANES, OVER THE SHARP FLINTS; SHOVING AND PUSHING AND DRAGGING AND SHRIEKING IN THE SHALLOWS; WHITE FIGURES SPLASHING THROUGH RIPPLED BRONZE...

THE BOYS ARE RUNNING DOWN TO THE WATER,

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HE EXPLAINED HOW HE WOULD LET HIS PRESENT BODY DIE, GROWING NEW GREEN FLESH COUNTLESS MILES AWAY. HE ASKED HER IF SHE WISHED TO STAY AND WATCH.

SHE SAID SHE HAD TO GET TO WORK.

SHOCKINGLY COLD, A THRILLING FIST OF ICE CLENCHING SUDDENLY AROUND THE CHEST, GROWING UNNOTICEABLY WARMER, DISPELLING THE MEMORY OF THAT FIRST ARCTIC EMBRACE...

THE WATER.

THE WATER BEADS IN THE AIR AROUND THEM.

THEY KISSED WITH A CURIOUS AWKWARDNESS, AND THEN HE WATCHED HER AS SHE WALKED AWAY...

...EACH LOVING THE OTHER...

...EACH HATING THEMSELVES FOR BEING SO UNFAIR.

"DIANE SUSSMAN STUCK HER TONGUE IN HIS MOUTH..."

"USED MY COMPASS-POINT, THEN RUBBED IN THE INK..."

"HEY! NO FAIR SPLASHING!"

ROSEWOOD MANOR

THEIR VOICES CLATTER THROUGH THE STILL AFTERNOON, ROWDY GATE-CRASHERS AT A WAKE, YET TO NOTICE THE EMBARRASSED SILENCE.

HE LAY DOWN IN A SHELTERED PLACE AND LET HIS INTELLIGENCE SEEP OUT INTO THE UNDERGROWTH.

HIS LAST COHERENT IMAGE WAS OF HER FACE, HER WHITE HAIR AND HER PALE BLUE EYES MELTING INTO GREEN...

THE WATER IS ALL AROUND THEM NOW.

...SO HE SAYS "JEEZ, LADY, I'M DOING IT AS FAST AS I CAN!" HAHAHAHA! YOU GET IT? SEE, THE KID'S NAME IS...

I GOT IT IN FIRST GRADE, YOU MORON.

SAY, HAVE I GOT SOMETHING STICKIN' TO...

UUEUURRGH!

IT'S A LEECH! IT'S A GODDAMNED LEECH!

HOLY...

AW NO! LEMME OUTTA HERE...

I'LL LIGHT A CIGARETTE. WE CAN BURN 'EM OFF...

AUUWUGH! THEY'RE ALL OVER MY LEGS! OH JEEZ...

LEECHES! I HATE LEECHES!

IT'S OKAY! DON'T PANIC! THEY'RE COMING OFF..

AW, GOD, HURRY UP, MAN...

OH, GROSS OUT!

UH, HEY, WHAT'S WITH NICKY?

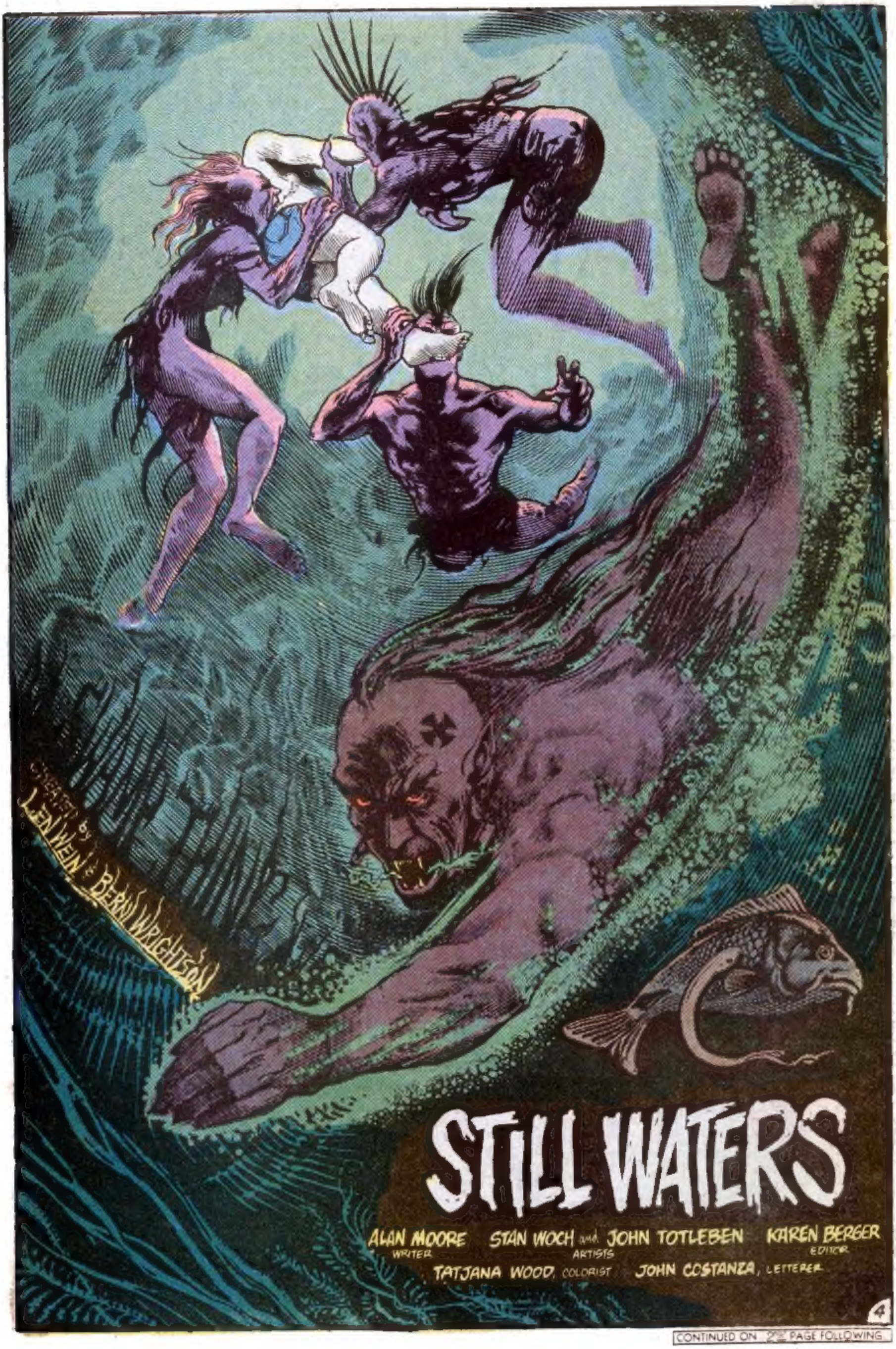
HUH?.

HEY! NICKY, YOU HAIRBAG! GET OUTTA THE WATER! IT'S FULLA LEECHES!

HEY, WHAT'S UP WITH HIM? HE CAN HEAR US...

HEY, NICKY? COME ON, MAN...

NICKY?



STILL WATERS

ALAN MOORE WRITER
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KAREN BERGER EDITOR
TATJANA WOOD, COLORIST
JOHN COSTANZA, LETTERER

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

HE'S...WHAT, HE'S HAD SOME KINDA *HEART ATTACK* OR SOMETHIN'?

OH JEEZ... UNDER THE *WATER*... I CAN *SEE* SOMETHIN'...

SHUT *UP*! THAT'S JUST *SHADOWS*...

DARK AND RICH, PUMPING THROUGH OUR HEARTS, LACED WITH THE SILVER OF STOLEN ADRENALINE.

WE FEAST WHEN WE CHOOSE, SAFE FROM THE DESSICATING SUNLIGHT.

DOWN HERE, THE NIGHT GOES ON FOREVER.

WE... WE GOTTA GET HIM *OUTTA* THERE. WE... OH JEEZ, WE CAN'T JUST...

NO. NO, THERE'S *LEECHES*. I CAN'T GO BACK IN. NO.

RONNIE, I CAN *SEE* THEM! UNDER THE *WATER*...

LEON, *SHUT* IT!

SHUT OUT THE KILLING DAY, AND LEAVE US TO THIS WEIGHTLESS TWILIGHT. WE BREATHE IN STAGNANT WATER. WE BREATHE OUT ROSES.

ONE BY ONE, WE DETACH AND GO DOWN...

WE...WE BETTER GO AND *F-FETCH* SOMEBODY...

LISTEN, NICKY... WE'LL BE RIGHT *BACK*...

O-OKAY?

DOWN...

DOWN TO WHERE THE GREEN BECOMES BLACK...

DOWN TO THE DROWNED TOWN.

SUBMERGED, THE TOWN'S MASK IS ERODED AWAY TO REVEAL THE FASCINATING SKULL BENEATH.

A SPARKLING CURRENT OF FISH THREADS ITSELF THROUGH A SHATTERED WINDSCREEN...

BLIND THINGS WRITHE DOWN LIGHTLESS AVENUES...

HOME...

BARON

WELCOME TO ROSEWOOD ILLINOIS PRIDE OF THE MIDWEST

Kentucky

ROSEWOOD.

ROSEWOOD, ILLINOIS...

OVER AND OVER HE TUMBLED THROUGH AN EMERALD UNIVERSE, THE NAME A VIVID RED SCRIBBLE IN HIS MIND...

ROSEWOOD. CONSTANTINE HAD SAID HE WOULD MEET HIM IN ROSEWOOD.

WHERE? WHERE HAD HE HEARD THE NAME BEFORE?

HAD IT HAPPENED BACK IN THE CLOUDY, HALF-RECOLLECTED TIME WHEN HE STILL BELIEVED HE WAS ALEC HOLLAND?

HIS INTELLIGENCE WAS A SIGNAL, FLICKERING THROUGH THE VAST TELEPHONE-EXCHANGE OF ROOTS AND TENDRILS...

HE TRIED TO CONCENTRATE.

HIS CONSCIOUSNESS, A SILVER BALL, RECOILED BETWEEN BUMPERS OF PULSING VIRIDIAN. HE TRIED TO THINK...

HE HAD BEEN IN ROSEWOOD. THERE WAS BLOOD, AND TROUBLE...

EVENTUALLY, SOMEONE HAD CLEANSED THE TOWN BY EXPLODING THE DAM...

RUNNING WATER.

THE WHOLE PLACE HAD SOME BAD, SOMETHING OLD AND THIRSTY HAD COME FLAPPING DOWN THE INTERSTATE AND SETTLED THERE...

AFTER THAT, THE TOWN GREW STRANGELY SILENT, AND WHATEVER HAPPENED IN ROSEWOOD HAPPENED AFTER DARK.

COSMIC BALL

A THOUSAND-TON WALL OF IRON-GREEN, A WHOLE CITY OF WATER ROLLING ACROSS THE FRAGILE DOLLHOUSES OF ROSEWOOD LIKE JUDGMENT...

IT TURNED THE PALE THINGS TO BITTER DUST, THEN SLICED THE DUST AWAY.

THERE CAME THE SUDDEN IMAGE OF A BLONDE GIRL, ONLY A CHILD...

THERE CAME THE RATTLE OF BOXCARS IN THE NIGHT...

...AND A MEMORY OF TEETH AND DARKNESS, BONE NEEDLES TRAILING WET RED THREAD...

...AND HE REMEMBERED.

HE REMEMBERED WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN ROSEWOOD.

LIKE A BEAD OF MERCURY HIS AWARENESS SKITTERED THROUGH THE JADE MAZE...

ROSEWOOD. HE FOCUSED UPON THE WORD, AND THE SURROUNDING CELL-WEB ECHOED IN RESPONSE; A SUDDEN PANG OF DARK FAMILIARITY.

HE WAS ALMOST THERE.

LOCATING A SMALL AND SOLITARY SEED, HE IMPRINTED HIS CODED INTELLECT UPON THE GERM WITHIN.

PROTEIN BALANCES ALTERED. CELLS THROBBED WITH NEW POSSIBILITIES...

HE WAS IN THE WORLD ONCE MORE, GROWING TOWARDS THE LIGHT.

AN HOUR LATER, HE BROKE THE SURFACE.

CONSCIOUS THOUGHT RETURNED IN THIN, TRANSLUCENT LAYERS; SOLID GREEN MELTING INTO A MEMORY OF PALE BLUE EYES, OF WHITE HAIR...

ABBY?

ABBY, DID YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID?

...SQUIRMING SLOWLY FREE FROM THE BLACK SOIL'S EMBRACE HE SHOUTED HER NAME INTO THE GREEN WELL WITHIN HIM.

HER RESPONSE CAME BACK, A STARTLED FLUTTERING MUTED BY DISTANCE...

A VOICE, CALLING FROM FAR AWAY...

ABBY? HEY, COME ON. I'VE HAD A WHOLE DAY OF PEOPLE WHO STARE INTO SPACE...

HUH? OH, DEANNA, I'M SORRY... I WAS JUST, Y'KNOW, THINKING ABOUT SOMEBODY...

"ABBY, SOONER OR LATER, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO FACE FACTS.

"YOUR HUSBAND'S A VEGETABLE."

MY HUS...? A VEGETABLE? HOW DID YOU... UH...

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

UH, WELL, MATT, YOUR HUSBAND. IN THE HOSPITAL...

THAT AS WHO YOU WERE THINKING ABOUT?

OH... RIGHT! YEAH. THAT'S WHO I WAS THINKING ABOUT. SURE.

ABBY, I KNOW IT'S NOT EASY LOSING SOMEONE...

NO. YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN.

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

"LISSEN, CONSTANTINE, I KNOW IT AIN'T EASY, LOSIN' SOMEBODY...

"SORRY I DIDN'T BREAK IT TO YOU EASIER. I MEAN, I THOUGHT YOU KNEW..."

"YEAH, WELL, I DIDN'T, DID I?"

SINCE I LEFT HER PLACE IN NEW YORK I'VE BEEN DOWN SOUTH. ONLY JUST GOT INTO CHICAGO...

SHE WANTED ME TO STAY, Y'KNOW THAT? I SAID, "SORRY, EMMA..."

HEY, MAN, DON'T TAKE EVERYTHIN' ON YOURSELF...

"SOONER OR LATER, EVERYBODY HAS TO GET LEFT ALONE."

LISSEN, I'M ONLY STOPPIN' OVER IN CHI TO SEE SOME BROTHERS, THEM I'M HAULIN' THE HOG BACK TO L.A.

WHY NOT TAKE A BREAK? WE'RE LIVIN' OVER A SURF SHOP. CHERYL'D LOVE TA SEE YA...

SORRY, FRANK...

GOT SOME BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF, JUST OUTSIDE TOWN. TELL ME AGAIN WHAT HAPPENED TO EMMA.

SUICIDE, PAPERS SAID. THREW HERSELF OUTTA THE WINDOW.

WELL, THAT'S A LOAD OF COBBLERS FOR A START...

HEY!

HEY, FRANK!

WHO'S THE FRUIT LOOP?

WHAT DID YOU SAY?

OH JEEZ...

HEY, CONSTANTINE, COME ON...

LISSEN, I KNOW THIS GUY, HE DIDN'T *MEAN* ANYTHING...

WHAT DID YOU SAY?

JOHN, *PLEASE*...

GRRNR

I... UH...

LOOK, I... UH...

LOOK, *FORGET* IT. I MISTOOK YOU FER SOME OTHER GUY.

TAKE IT EASY, OKAY?

LISA, YOU CHEAP *SLUT!* G MME THREE BEERS OVER HERE...

...AN' ONE EACH FER MY BUDDIES AT THE *BAR!*

THANKS FOR LETTIN' HIM BE, MAN. HE'S JUST SOME...

HEY! YOU BROKE YOUR *GLASS!* Y'GOT *BLOOD* ALL OVER YOUR HANDS..

I SHOULDN'T WORRY YOURSELF ABOUT IT, FRANK.

I'M SURE IT WON'T BE THE LAST.

RONNIE, BILL, LISTEN, WE'VE GOTTS TELL SOMEBODY. JEEZ, WHAT ABOUT HIS FOLKS...?

NO WAY. WE WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE SWIMMIN' OUT THERE. MY DAD, YOU DON'T KNOW, HE'D CRUCIFY ME...

THE COPS WOULD DO WORSE.

"BUT, LOOK, DON'T ANY OF YOU UNDERSTAND, OR WHAT? WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE NICKY THERE AND NOT TELL ANYBODY! I MEAN, WE TOOK HIM OUT THERE...

"IT'S ON OUR HANDS!"

THAT'S BULL! IT AIN'T MY FAULT HE WANTED TO GO THERE! I AIN'T TAKIN' THE BLAME. YOU WANT HIM, YOU GO BACK FOR HIM...

I AIN'T GOIN' BACK. I SEEN 'EM. THEY WERE...

ROCK 'N' ROLL

LE-ON...

"DON'T 'LEON' ME! I SEEN 'EM! UNDER THE WATER! THEY WERE UNDER THE WATER...

"...AND THEY WERE DRINKING HIM!"

LEON, SHUT IT!

AAUGH

YOU DIDN'T SEE ANYTHING, YOU LIAR! THERE WASN'T ANYTHING THERE! THERE WEREN'T NO FACES, AND THERE WEREN'T NO FINGERS UNDER THE WATER, AND, AND...

.. AND ANYWAY, YOU'RE ALL *CRAZY!* I'M *GOIN' HOME.*

YEAH, YEAH, ME TOO. MY FOLKS DON'T LIKE IT IF I STAY OUT LATE...

I CAN'T *BELIEVE* THIS. WHAT ABOUT *NICKY'S* FOLKS? NICKY'S BACK THERE, YOU JERKS.

"HE'S BACK THERE IN THE WATER."

AW, HE WAS JUST *ACTIN'* UP. HE WAS TRYIN' TO *SCARE* US, THAT'S ALL. HE'S PROBABLY *HOME* BY NOW, I BET.

THAT'S WHERE *I'M* GOIN'.

HEY! COME BACK! HE WASN'T ACTIN' UP! RONNIE, YOU *SAW* HIM...

"HE WAS *WHITE!*

"RONNIE, HIS LIPS, HIS CHEEKS. THEY WERE ALL WHITE...

"RONNIE?"

OKAY, RONNIE. *SURE.* YOU GUYS GO *HOME.* YOU GET ON HOME AN' LET *MOM* TUCK YA INTO *BED!* WHY *NOT?*

BUT LISTEN, *I* AIN'T LEAVIN' NICKY THERE, OKAY?

YOU GUYS ARE *SLIME,* YOU *KNOW* THAT?

"JUST *SLIME.*"

...A FISH-EATEN GAUZE

...IMPOSED AND DELICATE, HE CARRY IT TO THE CHAMBERS WHERE SHE WAITS FOR US...

...HER TIME IS ALMOST COME, AND SHE IS ENRAPTURED WITH A TERRIBLE BEAUTY.

...SHE ENCOUNTERED WHILE LIVING IN THE CITY LARVAL, HER NAME WAS CHARLENE

...SHE WORKED IN A SUPERMARKET AND WORRIED ABOUT HER PIMPLES AND KNEW THAT NO MAN WOULD EVER WANT HER.

NOW THE UNFULFILLED ACHING HAS GONE. SHE ISN'T CHARLENE ANY MORE.

SHE WAITS, PALE AND MAGNIFICENT IN THE HEAVY DARKNESS, FOR THE EMBRACE OF HER FIRST LOVER

WE CALL HER THE MOTHER

TOO MASSIVE TO HUNT, TOO CUMBERSOME TO FEED, SHE HUNGERS WHILE OUR VEINS THROB WITH PURLOINED CRIMSON

IN THE NAILS THAT PEARL SOFT-BLACK WE OPEN OUR PALMS, LETTING HER DRINK DEEP.

SHE WAITS FOR MANY

BEHIND HER BRIDAL TREE'N HAVENS NEST AND THRIVED IN THE MUSTY WATERS BENEATH WE GUIDE HER OUT THROUGH LAWLESS PASSAGE-WAYS

OUT TO MEET ECSTASY

TO MEET DEATH

TO THE BIRTH OF A UNIQUE NEW BEING.

FOR SOON, THE DARK MILLENNIUM WILL FALL, AND THE WORLD WILL BE A DIFFERENT PLACE, REQUIRING DIFFERENT SPECIES.

CATARACTS WILL OCCLUDE THE SUN, SHUTTING OUT ITS HATEFUL LIGHT...

...AND FABULOUS LIFE-FORMS SHALL FLOURISH AND STRUGGLE BENEATH THE PERPETUAL STARS.

HER EYES ARE TRUSTING AND BOVINE, DRUGGED WITH BLISSFUL MATERNITY. SHE SMILES AT US THROUGH CLOUDED WATERS.

FROM HER SEA-CHANGED BODY SHALL COME THE NEW GENERATION, BEGOTTEN IN THE DEPTHS...

...BORN IN VIOLENCE...

...SUCKLED IN SHADOW...

...RAISED IN ROSEWOOD.

I BRUSH THE SOIL... THE CLINGING ROOT FIBERS... FROM MY LIMBS...

I... AM WHOLE... AND I HAVE REACHED... MY DESTINATION.

THE SOIL... THAT FED ME... IS POWDERY... AND DRAINED... OF NUTRIENTS...

LAST TIME.. MY REGROWTH... TOOK WEEKS... BUT THIS TIME... ONLY HOURS.

I WALK DOWN... TO THE WATER'S EDGE...

THE ABSENCE OF BIRDSONG... UNDERLINES THE HUSH... OF THE EVENING...

I LOOK OUT... ACROSS THE STAGNANT... FLOODED VALLEY...

JUST FOR AN INSTANT... I SEE THE LAKE... TRANSFORMED TO BLOOD... CLOTTED WITH LILY-PADS... OF DEEPEST BURGUNDY...

THE SMELL... IS OVERWHELMING...

THE VISION FADES... AND I AM ALONE... WITH THE IMPASSIVE WATER...

EVENIN'.

TOOK YOUR TIME GETTIN' HERE, DIDN'T YOU?

CONSTANTINE

WHO... ARE YOU CONSTANTINE...?

WHY HAVE YOU LED ME TO THIS PLACE?

WELL, PERHAPS YOU COULD LOOK ON ME AS YOUR NEW MANAGER..

AN' I BROUGHT YOU TO ROSEWOOD TO CLEAN UP THE MESS THAT YOU LEFT BEHIND LAST TIME

LAST... TIME...? YOU KNOW THAT I WAS HERE BEFORE...?

WELL, YOU'RE NOT THE MOST INCONSPICUOUS GEEZER IN THE WORLD, AND I'VE GOT SOME VERY GOOD RESEARCHERS.

YOU WERE HERE TWO YEARS AGO. BEFORE THE FLOOD..

IF YOU KNOW... OF THE FLOOD... YOU KNOW THAT I LEFT... NO "ME" BEHIND ME.

ALL THE CREATURES... INFESTING ROSEWOOD.. DIED.. IN THE RUNNING WATER..

DID THEY REALLY? IS THAT WHO'LL BE THE ONES IN THE SUPERMARKET?

SUPERMARKET?

THAT IS RIGHT. IN THE FREEZER UNITS WHERE THEY KIPPED DURING THE DAY COMPLETELY AIRTIGHT, THOSE FREEZERS...

BUT THE RUNNING WATER IT WOULD DESTROY THEM

IN AIRTIGHT FREEZERS? IT NEVER EVEN TOUCHED 'EM.

ALL THEY HAD TO DO WAS WAIT UNTIL THE WATERS STOPPED RUNNING AND BECAME STILL...

SEE, IT WAS JUST SUNSET WHEN THE FLOOD HIT. NOT ALL OF 'EM WERE UP YET, WERE THEY?

"STILL, AND DEEP, AND STAGNANT..."

NICKY?

BUT HOW...CAN THEY SURVIVE ..UNDERWATER... WITHOUT AIR...?

SAME WAY THEY CAN LIVE IN COFFINS UNDER GROUND, THEY DON'T NEED AIR.

SEE, THE VIRUS THAT CAUSES VAMPIRISM IS ANAEROBIC. IT DOESN'T LIKE OXYGEN.

"IT'S A WONDER THEY NEVER THOUGHT OF LIVING UNDERWATER CENTURIES AGO. YOU DID 'EM A REAL FAVOR, MATE."

NICKY?

I CAME BACK, NICKY, LIKE I SAID...

VAMPIRES HAVE ONE DISADVANTAGE, THEY'RE USELESS IN DAYLIGHT. ANY GATHERING OF THEM ATTRACTS ATTENTION AND MEN WITH STAKES TO LET AIR INTO THEIR BODIES.

THAT'S WHY WE'VE NEVER HAD ORGANIZED VAMPIRE SETTLEMENTS...

"...UNTIL NOW."

HELLO, HOWARD.

THEY'RE LIVING DOWN THERE, IN ROSEWOOD, TOTALLY UNMOLESTED. HAVING A STABLE COMMUNITY HAS OPENED UP LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM...

THEY CAN SETTLE DOWN, AFTER YEARS OF HIDING...

THEY CAN BREED...

"BREED LIKE FLIES."

NICKY, OH MAN, WE WERE SO SCARED! WE THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD...

BUT... WHY NOW... AFTER TWO YEARS...?

BECAUSE THEY CAN FEEL SOMETHING IN THE AIR.

BIG THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN THE WORLD, MATE. WHAT'S GOING ON IN ROSEWOOD IS JUST THE FIRST TASTE OF WHAT'S COMING...

"JUST THE MEREST TOUCH."

JEEZ!

UH, NICKY, YOU BETTER FIND YOUR CLOTHES. YOU'RE FREEZING...

NOT YET. I WANT TO SWIM AGAIN.

SWIM...?

YOU'RE CRAZY. IT'S LATE. WE GOTTA GET HOME...

SWIM FIRST. COME ON, HOWARD. DOWN TO THE WATER...

NICKY? HEY, LOOK OUT! MY SHOES ARE GETTIN' WET!

NICKY, LET GO OF MY ARM. I DON'T LIKE THIS STUFF. I DON'T LIKE BEING OUT HERE ON OUR OWN...

ON OUR OWN? BUT HOWARD...

WE'RE NOT ON OUR OWN.

AAAAAAAAAA!

OH GOD, NICKY, PLEASE..

UP ABOVE, NEAR THE SHORELINE, A VIOLENT SPLASHING SHUDDERS OUT THROUGH THE MOTIONLESS WATER SHE SMILES, KNOWING THAT HER OFFSPRING WILL NOT GO HUNGRY

AS WE LEAD HER OUT INTO THE BIRTHING PLACE [redacted] GROW BRIGHT AND CLEAR

HE STANDS ALONE, WAITING FOR HER. SO STILL. SO SILENT. .

SO IMPOSSIBLY CALM.

NICKY, PLEASE, I CAME BACK FOR YOU, DON'T..

GLUUMH...

IN THE CENTER OF THE FIELD WE RELEASE HER, THE MOMENTUM CARRYING HER MASSIVE BODY FORWARDS TO WHERE HER LOVER STANDS

THEY MEET THEY TOUCH

THEY EMBRACE

NICKEEEEEEEEE

...AND THEN HER GREAT BODY BUCKS AND HEAVES AS THE BURDEN WITHIN IS RELEASED INTO THE CLEANSING GREEN WATER

WE STAND, MUTE WITH WONDER, AT THE GRACE OF HER CONVULSIONS

HER LOVER JACKKNIFES IN THE MURK ABOVE THE EGGS; A SINGLE WHIPLASH OF WHITE IN THE BLACKNESS; AND IT IS [illegible]

THEY HAVE BOTH OPENED THEIR BODIES TO THE OXYGEN-BEARING WATER NOW...

SID LIVES

THE END WILL NOT BE LONG.

I DID NOT... COME HERE... FOR WARNINGS... OF ARMAGEDDON. YOU... PROMISED ME... KNOWLEDGE... ABOUT MYSELF...

YEAH, YEAH, KNOWLEDGE DON'T COME CHEAP. IN FACT, SOMETIMES, THE PRICE IS ASTRONOMICAL...

THEY HAVE MADE THE FINAL SACRIFICE.

LIKE SALMON AFTER SPAWNING, THEY THRASH WEAKLY, DECAYING EVEN IN LIFE.

DYING, THEY ARE THE GREATEST AMONG US. LINKING OUR HANDS, WE HONOR THEM...

YOU... EVADE... MY QUESTIONS... CONSTANTINE... THIS GAME... THAT YOU PLAY... IS DANGEROUS...

WE CIRCLE ROUND...

FASTER AND FASTER WE SPIN, A PALE CAROUSEL CAREENING THROUGH THE SUBMARINE DARK...

THE LOVERS ARE QUITE DISINTEGRATED NOW, A SUSPENSION OF PALE FLAKES IN THE CHURNING WATER.

NO MATTER. THEIR DEATH HAS ITS FUNCTION.

THEY DID THE THING REQUIRED OF THEM.

FIRST, YOU TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS HERE.

THEN PERHAPS WE TALK.

CONTINUED ON THE FOLLOWING

ROUND AND ROUND WE GO...

ROUND AND ROUND AND ROUND...

...AND UNKNOWABLE.

THE EGGS CAST A MILKY AND OPALESCENT LIGHT, LIKE THE NEON TUMORS OF LANTERN-FISH. GRAY SHAPES TWIST WITHIN THEM...

NEW LIFE. NEW AND SAVAGE...

THE SHELLS BULGE AND RIPPLE AS THE FETAL BLURS INSIDE THEM SPASM WITH THE JOY AND AGONY OF EXISTENCE.

A MEMBRANE BEGINS TO TEAR, AND THEN ANOTHER...

THE MOMENT HAS ARRIVED.

WELL?

IT BEGINS.

THERE...

NOW WE'RE BOTH IN OVER OUR HEADS.

NEXT: FISH STORY

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Dear Editor,

About SW #32: Great day in the mornin', this one was just *too* good! When was the last time I actually felt something other than mild amusement or outright boredom reading a comic? I felt anxiety, fear; a hot tear welling up in my eye. I was engaged, *involved!*

In the *Comic Buyer's Guide*, Cat Yronwode lamented the new writers' and artists' ignorance of the industry's greats—Caniff, Kelly, Eisner, etc. I am so grateful that Alan Moore and Shawn McManus are not among that deprived number. This little gem of a story is indeed an honorable footnote to Walt Kelly and his redoubtable possum, Pogo. "Pog" is a tribute to a master done in masterly fashion.

I imagine you're going to hear a lot about this one. So I'll step back and let others praise, analyze, and admire. I only want to ask—no, plead, somebody out there let Mr. Moore write a Superman story!

Gary D. Robinson
Box 146
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Superman editor, Julius Schwartz, already has, Gary. DC PRESENTS #85 (September cover date) features (you guessed it) a Superman and Swamp Thing team-up of sorts. You already know that Alan's the writer, Rick (remember him) Veitch is the penciller, and Al Williamson is the illustrious inker. It's got a knock-out cover by Rick too, so be sure to look for it in June.

And on another note ... I'd like to excessively thank Don Thompson, co-editor of the Comic Buyer's Guide, *for his numerous rave reviews constant plugs, and numerous rave reviews on the book. Don has covered practically every issue these past months, and his acclaim and support has very much helped to spread the word among the industry.*

*****

Dear Karen,

About 15 to 20 years ago, my local hometown newspaper carried "Pogo." Being a very young boy, I could never make any sense whatsoever about what was going on. I guess even then I recognized the strip as a contradiction. It had the cutest set of "funny animals" in the paper, which drew my attention immediately, but as a child I could never grasp what was going on. Weren't all kids endowed with the gift to be entertained by any ol' cartoon?

Now, twenty years later, I see the problem. Thanks to Alan Moore I now realize that "Pogo" wasn't just "any ol' cartoon." A few weeks ago I followed the SWAMP THING (from a safe distance, mind you) as he journeyed into hell. This week I was tutored by a muck-encrusted creature as to how a bunch of "funny animals" once showed humanity their hopes, aspirations, vitality, and failures on the funny pages. Because of Alan Moore's creative tribute and Shawn McManus' commendable and fitting art, I now understand what has escaped me for twenty long years.

Adam Burchess
1004A Westover Dr.
Greenville, NC 27834

*****

Dear Editor,

I'm sure people didn't "get" SWAMP THING #32. They read "only" an entertaining comic story with a touching message and an ingeniously amusing alien language. But I know better.

I know it was a loving and masterful tribute to the humor and compassion of Walt Kelly and his "Pogo" cartoon strip. It took me a while to catch on—I noticed right off that the red-suited character (whose name had slipped by me) was drawn in a Pogo-shape, but it wasn't until I read "It is hard to configure the angles on a faureigna" that the light dawned. At that point, my enjoyment and appreciation exploded—savoring the language, identifying the characters, decoding the references. "Bartle's" death already had special poignancy for me, but then ... I read "Dark, a soul wind blasts so chilly ..." and I was laughing with tears in my eyes, crying with a smile on my face.

Walt Kelly, it's safe to say, was one of America's most human entertainers, and one of its most entertaining humanists. He's also a personal hero of mine, and I miss "Pogo" very much. SOTST #22 (the last comic to bring tears) is the best comic I have ever read, but I think now #32 is my personal favorite. I'm going out to buy extra copies for every "Pogo" fan I can find.

Thank you, Mr. Moore. Thank you very much.

Gratefully,
Perry Beider
33W Manzanita Park
Stanford, CA 94305

Dear Alan,

Never in all my years of comic-book collecting have I been moved enough to write a letter until now. "Pog" in SWAMP THING #32 is one of the best comic book stories I have ever read.

A friend of mine had been telling me how great this book is, but I had never bought an issue until #32. When I began reading "Pog" I was elated to see several very familiar faces only spoken of as comics legends today.

I have been a fan of Walt Kelly's Pogo Possum stories since a very early age. Your story, Mr. Moore, is an excellent tribute to him. Walt Kelly was always interested in getting us to take a good look at ourselves and the world around us. Pogo Possum made people both laugh and cry at what they usually ended up seeing.

Mr. Moore, you have used "likenesses" of Kelly's characters to convey a very powerful message to those of us in the human race. You've gotten us to think about how we treat our environment and the other beings that we share this planet with. We take a great deal of things for granted. We like to think of this planet as being "ours" when really it is not.

Your story "Pog" has reminded us of this fact; I only hope we can treat this world and all of her inhabitants with the respect they truly deserve.

Again, from the bottom of my heart, I thank you for your tribute to Walt Kelly and all the ideals that "Pogo" stood for. I am sure that if Mr. Kelly were still here on this planet with us today, and that if he read SWAMP THING #32, the story would bring a smile to his face and a tear to his eye.

Sincerely,
Boyd White
7014 Levi Rd.
Hixson, TN 37343

It's awfully hard to respond to so much favorable and complimentary mail that says everything that needs to be said and more. "Pog" was an admiring, loving tribute to the late Walt Kelly, and your letters clearly echo our feelings and sentiments on the man and his work.

*****

Dear Swamp Ones,

I wouldn't have thought that #32 would have been possible. Oh, I'm sure that *some* 32nd issue would have been

a certainty, it's the *story* in #32 that really took me by surprise. Swamp Thing and cartoon characters in the same story? Uh-uh. But it worked.

We all have our favorite fictional characters and the very best of them seem to take on a life of their own. We imagine them existing apart from the stories we read, as if those stories are only our small window on their ongoing lives. This feeling is particularly strong with truly great comic strip characters. We read a small slice of the adventures every day, so that the feeling of catching a glimpse of a continuing and richer life is especially enhanced. But, as with all things, an and eventually comes for even the best and longest-running of comic strips. Most do not come to a true end—to a real conclusion. They just stop. This, combined with this feeling of them having an existence apart from their daily adventures (and, I guess, a desire that we have for those we love to never die), can make us feel that these beloved characters are still out there somewhere, leading their lives as before—only we can't look in on them anymore.

In #32 we caught a glimpse of some of these characters (sort of), and now I'm wishing we hadn't. The dream of them continuing more or less as before is shattered. Is this the fate of comic strip characters of bygone days: to search and search, always fruitlessly, for a new home, all the while slowly diminishing in numbers, growing farther and farther away from what they once were? Not a hallowed life where their charm and integrity continue but rather a grim voyage into oblivion? *That* is true horror.

T.M. Maple
Box 1272, Station B
Weston, ONT M9L2R9

Point well taken, T.M., but "Pog" as a story was by no means supposed to be a symbolic representation of the fruitless fate of discontinued comic strip characters, nor a version of "Pogo's" "afterlife" either. Granted, I admit it's hard to make that distinction, particularly when these characters were meant to look and speak like Pogo and his friends, but the story itself wasn't designed to be one that they might have experienced.

And then we got a lot of letters like the following ...

Sympathoastical greetulations,

I have recently discofoundered that you and your crew visitated our humble lady. Trulymost, she is a beautipulchrous lady upon which you could repoplicate. Unfortunately, she is already "owned" by the tortmerciless homo-sapiens, or "man the wise" as they nomenclate themselves. They are a species not only unbeneficent and antigoodly to other species, but also to their own cuzlings. I overtruly pitify you, cosmohopping all the way from your lady in the Okeedokey galaxy to our lady in the backwater parsec of the unfashionable end of the Milky Way, only to see front mate Bartle discorpsified by the very malevil you hoped to ixcape from. I truly hope you won't abhorhate me, since I belong to this lady. I would be overfelicitous to countsider you as my cuzlings.

Hoping you'll
recomeback or find
your own lady.
The Sesquipedalian

Aside to Alan, Karen, et al.
I cried.

* * * * *

Dear Karen,

When I opened up SWAMP THING #32, what I found inside shocked me to say the very least. Cute little animals in spacesuits and with a turtle as their spaceship. I moaned as I started to read it and I knew that I was going to regret it. I was wrong, very wrong!

After I had finished reading "Pog," I found that I had a tear in my eye and felt ashamed that I had passed judgment on this truly wonderful story before I had read it. The way that Alan Moore had crafted the story so that Swampy was not the main attraction but only a bystander, of sorts, was well handled. It was a welcome change of pace to the series and proves that it is the best-written comic on the market. Guest artist, Shawn McManus, should be proud of his work, especially the page where Pog and Bartle see Swampy for the first time. I too felt like it was the first time that I had set eyes on him and I liked that feeling.

I would like to thank everyone who had a part in putting together SWAMP THING #32. I'm proud to add it to my collection and to say "Thank You" for a wonderful book.

Eric T. Hendrie
11600 Frost Rd.
Portland, MI 48875

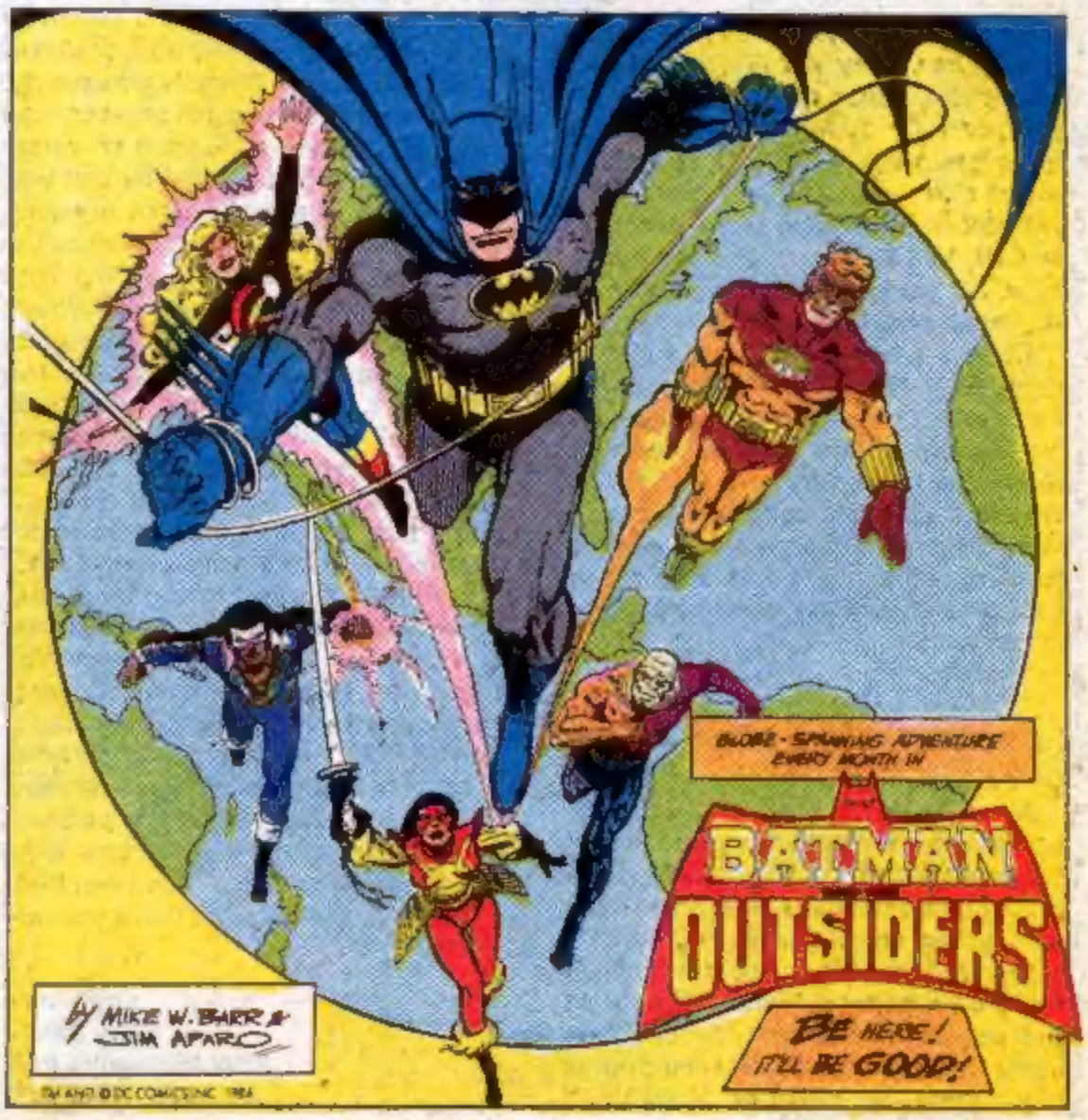
* * * * *

Dear Animals,

Sigh Once amore I'm immused with cranier pondlings from the expreclal scriting of Alan Moore. Only he can combuse such differse illustyles as Pogo and Swamp Thing into so entertwining a tale. (Whew! If I keep trying to think of all those linguabatics, I'll be typing for a week.) You would think the dissimilarities are irreconcilable (c'mon, I'm talking normal now), at least in crafting a serious story, but Alan manages to pull it off. I saw nothing funny in "Pog," I can't quite call it horror, either, although it did have its moments. It was sad, very sad. Too sad. I think the grill is point enough, without the death of poor Bartle. I guess in a strange land, any philotype can be dangerous, even your own, be it aligate, marsupiate, or primate. Which means, if you meet a Neanderthal after years of nonhuman companionation, don't rush up and hug him. He may hug back.

David Alan Wright
39 Howard St.
New Britain, CT 06051

That's about all for now, people. Thanks for reading and writing, and we'll see you next month when Bissette comes back and Swamp Thing has the fight of his life against the spawn of the "Mother"!—Karen


GLOBE-SPANNING ADVENTURE EVERY MONTH IN
BATMAN
OUTSIDERS
BE HERE! IT'LL BE GOOD!
BY MIKE W. BARR & JIM APARO
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